

I applaud President Obama for his extraordinary leadership in this momentous effort to forge long overdue comprehensive immigration reform. Yesterday, a Senate bipartisan working group released an unprecedented set of core legislative principles to resolve our broken immigration system. Today, President Obama advanced this promising and historic moment, outlining a vision that embraces our nation's long-standing traditions for protecting all families, including same-sex partners, and accepting the huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

Under the President's leadership, we are on the verge of reform that will bring millions of people out of the shadows and honor the dreams of brilliant and hard-working students, youth who are essentially Americans without social security numbers. Our country nears the possibility of greater technological innovation and economic prosperity, where persons with advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) will be allowed to join our workforce and advance our nation's global economic competitiveness.

There is no question that our broken immigration system has torn countless families apart and brought great fear and pain to our communities. There are currently over 4.55 million people, including 1.96 million Asian and Pacific Islanders, in the family immigration backlog waiting unconscionable periods of time to reunite with their loved ones. Asian American and Pacific Islanders are disproportionately impacted by bureaucratic immigration delays. Families in my district, particularly those from China, India, and the Philippines, suffer from the most extreme backlog, often waiting decades before receiving a green card.

There are tens of thousands of LGBT families in immigration limbo throughout the country, prohibited from sponsoring their partners for residency. Judy Rickard, a constituent from my district in California, and her same-sex, bi-national partner are being torn apart by unjust immigration laws. Judy and others face an unequal reality compared with heterosexual couples.

Next month, to address an outdated, inefficient, and discriminatory immigration system, I will reintroduce the Reuniting Families Act, a bill that reunites families by classifying lawful permanent resident spouses, children, and same-sex, bi-national partners as "immediate relatives," and exempting them from numerical caps on family immigration. This legislation will reduce visa backlog and relieve families from prolonged and unnecessary separation and heartache.

As Immigration Taskforce Chair of the Congressional Asian and Pacific Caucus (CAPAC) and LGBT Caucus vice-chair, I offer my utmost gratitude to President Obama for calling for the reunification of all families, regardless of sexual orientation, and the elimination of discrimination in immigration law against same-sex partners. We must never forget the teachings and words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. -- "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." We must never cease to protect the rights, visibility, and equal treatment of the most vulnerable among us. Our nation will be made stronger through reform that is comprehensive and inclusive, humane and just.

